

Building Faith - Changing Lives - Sharing **Christ**

Week #6

Overview

Jesus knows he is going toward torture, pain and death. His triumphal entry is anything but, however; he confronts evil with resolution and strength of will, powerless and yet, all powerful. With the possible exception of his mother, Jesus was utterly alone en route to the cross because no one realized who he was, not even his closest disciples. All were committed to who they thought he was. Only his Father had the true vision of who he was to become. One task Jesus had was to pull away from all the worldly visions others had for him, like becoming the most powerful ruler on earth, a miraculous healer, or one who would meet all the desires of the people.

The Son of God was in the midst of a crisis in which he would face both danger and opportunity. Courageously, he chose to move ahead into darkness and pain, letting go of safety and security, not even allowing himself to be tempted by Peter, the well-meaning disciple who loved him.

Worship Theme

We have all experienced many crises throughout our lives. There are three stages to a crisis: separation, transformation and emergence. If we die to self, and choose to give up the comfortable and familiar by entering the first cycle of separation, we have the potential to become transformed or reborn, brought closer to wholeness and the real self God intends us to become.

The decision is rarely easy, nor one we may eagerly choose. The man who claimed he wanted to follow Jesus turned aside because first, he had to go home and bury his father. On the other hand, when Mary heard the angel's message about the son she was to bear, she immediately agreed to become obedient, saying "Let it be so with me." Likewise, at the tomb, Mary's priority was Jesus. Consistently and loyally, she went back to the other disciples to share her discovery, but her focus on her beloved "teacher" was clear.

A myriad of agonies can flare up within us during a crisis: fear, disorientation, ambivalence, stress, burnout, anxiety, loneliness, and doubt. In the midst of the negative emotions, we hope that by going within and being patient in our waiting, we may be able to leave behind those things that are deadening, such as the loyalties that no longer have life for us. However, this requires faith, discipline, courage and humility.

Teilhard de Chardin, Jesuit priest, paleontologist and philosopher, asked for the kind of faith that would allow him to do this when he prayed, "In those dark moments, O God, grant that I may understand that it is you who are painfully parting the fibers of my being in order to penetrate to the very morrow of my substance."



Martin Marty writes, “Brokenness and wounding do not occur in order to break human dignity but to open the heart so God can act.”

Jesus was not spared the human agony of separation in the garden of Gethsemane and thus cried out for his favorite disciples to stay awake and keep him company during his period of agonizing suffering.

Yet he moved ahead, being obedient to the will of his Father, moment by terrifying moment. The transformation that took place, his death and resurrection, changed the world forever. Jesus was given eternal life, both in the present and beyond.

Small Group Discussion

Read John 20: 1-18, Romans 8:17; and Philippians 3:7-11 in your small group. The very negative factors during a crisis, (fear, disorientation, etc.) are the very ones that create an opportunity for exceptional growth. Teachable moments occur when old routines are abandoned, former roles no longer work, and plans are shattered.

1. Can you give an example of an important crisis in your own life or that of another person that created an opportunity for exceptional growth?
2. Were there any particularly helpful ways in which certain people reached out to you?
3. Jesus knows what crisis awaits him after this triumphal entry. In what ways does his commitment inspire you?

A spiritual community can offer support to one who is in crisis by not offering typical solutions such as: ignoring, distracting, or blaming the person. For instance, if the person is a recently bereaved widow, caring others need to persuade her to stay in place despite the pain. As she experiences less control and confidence, her passivity and receptivity can make her more open to the presence of God, thus the crisis can become religious to her as she senses God’s leading and healing. As people encourage her to see hope, they can propel her toward resolution.

The Christian in crisis is invited to identify his or her own experience of loss and gain with Christ who taught “that unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.” (John 12:24).

1. Can you recall and share a time in your own life when you experienced this happening?
2. In light of living through challenging times, why do you think it is important to give someone the opportunity to tell his/her particular life stories?
3. Has seeing someone else’s commitment during a time of crisis inspired you to maintain your commitments? Can you think of any situations when your commitment might inspire others in their time of need?



As we learn to accept our one and only life cycle, we will be enabled to accept the failures and limitations in life which will help us accept the inevitable, ask forgiveness for omissions and commissions, and come to a sense of peace in the face of death.

1. How can accepting the negative and positive aspects of our lives enable us to tolerate and even accept the particularities of others?
2. Can you give an example of how this has been true for you?
3. We are post-resurrection Christians. This means that we know that for Jesus resurrection comes after the crucifixion. We don't face crucifixion, but we do face challenges in which we must whether or not we will remain committed to Christ and his claim on our lives. What are some decisions that you face, where you must first suffer before you taste "resurrection"? How does Christ's commitment and the commitment of others inspire you? What decision will you make?

Time for Christ...

Use Psalm 2 as part of your small group's closing prayer.

